

STEARNS' CREEK OF MINING ACTIVITY

RICH FIELD IS CLOSE TO EL PASO

Pass Separates Two Districts Which, While Close Together, Are Different.

MINERAL WEALTH IS IN GREAT ABUNDANCE

Early Miners Had to Fight Indians and Many Were Killed by Apaches.

(By L. H. Davis.)

Almost at El Paso's doors is Stearns, New Mexico, the center of one of the richest mining districts in the entire southwest. Stearns is a station on the Southern Pacific, 106 miles west or five hours ride from El Paso. Its elevation is 4,500 feet above sea level and its grade is so steep that it takes a double header to pull the trains over the divide.

For it is on the backbone of the great continental divide between the Atlantic and the Pacific, a pass in the great cordillera or Rocky mountains. It is in the midst of the mighty plateau whose hills and mountains have yielded the most wonderful mineral riches in the world, such as from the camps of Leadville, Butte, Silverton, Aspen, Telluride and Gunnison in the north, and the Mogollons, Steeples, Rock, Tumble, Apache Box immediately north, and the camps of Tigre, Nacozari, Ocampo, Santa Rita and others, innumerable to the south in Mexico. It is in the bosom of that mountain system in which Baron Von Humboldt, 149 years ago, predicted would be found the greatest treasure vaults of mineral in the world—a prediction which has never since been disproved.

It is also in the circle of the great camps of Blaine, Pearce, Dragones, Johnson, Benson, Tombstone, Clifton-Moenc, The Huron and Santa Rita and Lordsburg, being on the dividing boundary line between Arizona and New Mexico.

Stearns is in the pass through the long mountain called the Peloncillo, which reach from north to south about 50 miles. This pass separates the mining camps on the north from those on the south. The northern one is called the Kimball district and the southern one is called the San Simon district. The two districts, although so close to each other, are strangely different from each other geologically and mineralogically. The Kimball district being made up of granites, porphyries and other intrusive rocks with fissure veins and lodes carrying only gold and silver; while the San Simon district is largely made of sedimentary or limestone rocks through which are porphyry intrusions, and the ore deposits consist principally of lead, copper, zinc, silver and iron, a by-product. I visited each and most of the principal mines and prospects.

Kimball Gold-Silver Belt.

This district, which extends a mile north of Stearns and extends north about 10 miles. It is said to have been discovered about 1875, but serious prospecting did not begin till about 1881-2. No camp in the west suffered so much from raids of Indians. In doubtful Canyon, the mine of the Beck mine in the northern end of the district, the Apaches under Geronimo massacred 135 miners and the bodies bleached in the desert place. Silver was the chief product in the earlier days, but of late gold ores of commercial value have been found. The total production of the Kimball district is said to be between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000. And this was accomplished under such obstacles such as Indian raids, lack of water, lack of capital to start with, crude methods of ore treatment, high freight rates and smaller charges. Happily, most of these obstacles have been removed now and there is nothing lacking to make it one of the greatest camps in the west, except capital and development. The most serious obstacle of all has been the lack of water, a well on the Beck mine by the National Gold and Silver Mining company, which has demonstrated the presence of abundance of water at 700 feet below the surface, right in the heart of the district.

Geology of Kimball District.

In this district the principal rocks are a dark gray, fine grained diorite porphyry, with a flow of rhyolite, similar to those in the Steeples, Rock, Apache Box and Mogollon districts. In the vicinity of the Beck mine prominent dikes of monzonite porphyry cut through the diorite porphyry which is locally called andesite, much altered and chloritized. The veins of the district are marked by brecciated and silicified zones of considerable width. The pay ores of gold and silver are found generally in the quartz, and the brecciated and silicified zones, which are rich ores at the surface are chlorides of silver carrying gold, but down at the depth of 100 feet or more below the surface, the ore is not oxidized and occurs in sulphides, such as pyrites, galena and even zinc blende. The finer grained pyrites carry the richer gold and silver values.

Development and Mineralization.

"Have much these hills look like those of the Cripple Creek district?" is the exclamation of the visitor for the first time. The visitor is also amazed to find so much work has been done and improvements made in a district so little heard of by the outside world. A dozen passenger trains with crowds of people fly through the Pass daily without ever dreaming there is a rich mining camp almost within a mile behind the hills just north of Stearns. Possibly the tourists will become acquainted with this district when the ten thousand automobiles run through this Pass on the Borderland route. This district has never had any publicity such as many other camps, but it certainly has.

Accompanied by Charles R. Mott, superintendent of the National Gold & Silver Mining company, D. L. Creswell, the Stein merchant, N. T. Tresear, manager of the El Oro mining properties, J. C. Conklin, mining engineer and one of the owners of the El Oro Extension group, I arrived by conveyance over a good wagon road in an hour and a half drive at the first big mine in that camp, which is called locally the Beck. As correspondent of The Herald I received a most cordial welcome everywhere I went, and was invited to inspect the several mines on the surface and down under ground.

Mines of National Gold & Silver Co.

The first inspection made by me was of the group of mines locally called the Beck mines, owned by the National Gold & Silver Mining company, a wealthy Chicago corporation, whose officers are Judge

Mark R. Sherman, president; W. Morton Brown, vice president; S. W. Winn, secretary and treasurer; Charles R. Mott, superintendent; and Fritz Nidenmier, foreman. The property consists of a group of ten contiguous claims called the Blue Mare, Gold Standard, Gertrude, Halcyon, Montana, Jessie, Jack, Marion, Yankee and Chicago, covering over 200 acres of mineral ground in the center of the district where rolling hills so much resemble those of Cripple Creek.

This property, being the foremost in the district, was of unusual interest as furnishing a key to most of the other mines and possibilities. On the surface were seen numerous shafts and dumps of ores indicating the presence of numerous veins and ore deposits over a large area. Near houses for the officers, bunk houses and numerous dwellings for employees gave the appearance of a large mining camp. There is a 50 ton mill with 70 horse power engine and boiler, the mill being of the Elspass pattern with three Wilfley concentrating tables. Nearby was a derrick over the 700 foot well drilled to the ground water level; and next was the 50 horse power steam pump. This is the system or practice that will be employed in all the other mines in the Kimball district, whose values are similar to those of the Mogollon district.

Values Increase.

For several months a steady campaign of development has been in progress on this property, and drifting eastward on the vein has consequently shown increased values and quantities. Last week a shoot was opened beginning with about three feet width. The day I arrived it had widened to over six feet and was between perfect vertical walls. This was in the 300 foot level, 550 feet south-east of the shaft. It was the talk of the camp, and of course I went down at once to see it. Day and night shifts were working. I saw in the face of the drift six feet of solid vein, which had been sampled and assayed and runs \$15 to \$18 gold and silver per ton, the gold values being one third. The vein matter was speckled with particles of bright pyrites which glistened beautifully under the candle light. In the center of the vein lay a dividing vein and a streak 18 inches wide that runs much higher than the rest of the vein. This rich shoot is heading straight to the center of the hill in which the proposed deep shaft will be sunk, down to the water level, less than 200 feet from the face of the drift, or about 800 feet easterly from the present shaft. There is also a drift in the opposite direction, west, of the camp, and of course I went to the north side where is a drift 1000 feet long.

Is a True Vein.

This Halcyon vein, as it is called, is a true fissure running through the country in a general east and west course. Ore shoots also occur on contacts of the conglomerate or breccia with the porphyry. "In the present development of the Halcyon vein," says superintendent Mott, "we have recently run a continuous ore shoot from three to six feet wide, a distance of 150 feet, the values of which run as high as \$27.30 per ton, the lowest being \$11 and the general average \$15.00. The mine is looking better than it ever did. Although there is about two miles of underground workings."

Besides the Halcyon vein there is the Talco vein which has shown up some remarkably rich ore shoots. Bunches of ore run in the hundreds and even thousands of dollars are frequently encountered. But the future of the mine will depend on the development of large reserves of mineral grade milling ore. And there are several cross veins, all carrying good values. There is sufficient positive ore blocked out to keep the mill running two years.

Judge Sherman, a corporation lawyer and a mining expert, who is also a close friend of the mine, makes frequent visits, said: "We have spent about a quarter of a million dollars in development and exploration work. We have never sought publicity and the stock holders have not heard of the mine, but we have done more development than most any other company in southwest New Mexico, and the outside world has heard scarcely anything about it. We propose to keep at it until we have made a hole in the side of the hill, and sink the big shaft and make connections so that we can hoist several tons of ore a day for the mill. For the engineer and machinery, our company is composed of some of the most substantial business men in Chicago."

The Discoverers.

The original discoverers of the Beck mine were Frank Wyman, J. R. Bent and John Kimball, who located the claims in 1881 and worked them, taking out large fortunes. Their mines were abandoned in 1890, and the mines while hunting them. They named the Beck after a mule, and the Beck mine after the mule. In 1909, Frank Wyman lived in Denver and is said to be operating mines in Colorado west of there. Bent is president of the Tombstone National bank, and Kimball is said to be dead. The late Bill Morris afterward abandoned the Beck mine and sold to the present company in 1902.

El Oro Camp.

Two miles northwest of the Beck is the new El Oro camp. Here are two rich gold claims called the Nellie Gray and the Black Fox, now owned by D. L. Creswell, Charles Smith, F. R. Smith and Sam Olney, which has until lately been operated under bond and lease by Diamondfield Jack Davis of Goldfield, Nevada, fame. These claims cross Coon Canyon and run up both slopes. A tunnel has been run into the Nellie Gray 150 feet and at 70 feet from the tunnel portal a vein sunk 30 feet deep from the bottom of which there is a drift 20 feet north. Besides there is another crosscut in the tunnel. The vein was wide and they drifted on the foot wall, the hanging

The Beck Mine and Mill Near Stearns, N. M.

wall not being cut into yet. The small development makes the splendid showing. There is a big shoot at the mine 14 feet wide of milling ore. One streak, six feet wide, averages \$14 per ton. J. C. Conklin, sampled the entire tunnel several times and says it averaged for 50 feet long the entire width of tunnel \$15 per ton, two thirds being gold. North and across the Coon Gulch is the Black Fox or Old Volunteer, on the same big lode as the Nellie Gray. A shaft 15 feet deep shows a face of ore clear across averaging \$6 to \$8 per ton in gold and silver. Along the side of this mother lode are series of smaller veins all carrying values in gold and silver.

On the same vein are the Coyote and Pailine claims, discovered and worked by the late Tom Coyote, the sole survivor of the Apache massacre in Doubtful Canyon. Next comes the Doubtful Canyon mine, owned by Batchelor or "Big" mine owned by Frank L. Creswell and F. W. Catlin. Diving west and adjoining the El Oro group, this is developed by a 250 foot shaft and shows a good vein rich in silver and gold.

The Old Volcano Mine.

Just over the hills to the north of the El Oro camp is the Volcano mine, said to have been at one time the greatest producer in the Kimball district, having produced several hundred thousand dollars. It is now owned exclusively by Capt. Charles R. Smith, an old pioneer and mining man of Grant county who has lived in Silver City. He has a large house at the mine and lives all alone. He entertains many visitors, especially young people who often come and have dances in his spacious ball room.

The Volcano mine was originally located by P. R. Smith shortly after the discovery of the Beck mine, in the early 80's, says Capt. Smith, "and he worked it and shipped about \$100,000 of ore to the Silver City smelter prior to its burning down. In 1909 the Wilfley and Mining company bought him out and erected the 10-stamp and amalgamating mill. They did a good deal of development and laid a pipe line down some 25,000 feet to some water holes in the Animas valley, costing \$20,000; but as there was not sufficient water, they closed down the mill. Two years ago, Capt. Smith bought the company out. "I have plenty of milling ore," said he, "but have no money to operate the mill. My idea is to give the thought of bringing water from the valley, and instead to sink down in the mine for water for the mill should be sunk down to the ground-water level where the drill hole at the Beck mine has demonstrated there is abundance of water. I would prefer to develop the mine and at the same time develop water than to spend large sums in sinking for water in the valley. Originally the ores ran 50 ounces silver and were shipped at a profit, but the new and deeper ore bodies run about \$8 a ton and must be milled."

The Two Shafts.

The Volcano has a main inclined shaft 300 feet deep and another 50 foot shaft 300 feet north. The vein is marked by a brecciated and silicified zone 50 feet wide, and a prominent outcrop called locally a rhyolite dike, traceable for over a mile, which cuts through the valley hills. Most of the values were found on the hanging wall of the dike where it is a fault fissure from three to seven feet wide, and the ore is rich. Rich values are also found on the foot wall of the dike. There are five claims in the group. The considerable development work has been done by them. The ores are gold, silver, lead and zinc. Samples of ore are assayed from three to six ounces gold, 24 to 30 ounces silver and 20 to 50 percent lead.

The Rico claims are about four to five miles south of Stearns and carry lead, zinc and silver. They are developed by a tunnel and a shallow shaft.

The Oldham claims in the same belt carry lead carbonate ore. This is a good property. A rich strike was made in this property last week. It is six miles south of Stearns.

The Granite Gap mines are from 12 to 14 miles south of Stearns and have a record production of over \$900,000. The ores are lead, zinc and silver, carrying 15 to 20 ounces silver. Vast ore bodies were found in pipes, chambers and veins, and the ore is of the stone. These mines were worked off and on for 25 years, at one time by Conklin and Wyman and later by S. C. Pratt, and lately by the Granite Gap Mining company, composed of J. F. Dawling, C. H. Stevens, F. W. Berkshire, W. R. McKenna, H. M. Couser and others of El Paso.

At one time 30 miners were employed. The principal producer was the Louise mine. A few feet north of this mine are the middle workings extending clear through the mountain. The ore occurs exclusively in the limestone but always the granite porphyry dike, generally on its hanging side. It is understood that the El Paso people are arranging to resume operations.

Considering the intense mineralization, the nature of the minerals, the multitude of veins and ore deposits, extending from north to south over 20 miles, the convenience to railroad transportation, the magnitude of production under unfavorable conditions and the proven continuity of ore deposits and values to depth, the outlook for the mines north and south of Stearns is certainly most promising.

The town of Stearns is both a mining and railroad camp. It has a large trade with miners, ranchers and railroad employees. The population is from 200 to 300. There are two general merchandise stores, one of Creswell, Brock and the other of Charles Noble; a two story hotel of J. P. Mansfield; a saloon of R. E. Walsh; two restaurants and a school with about 30 pupils. A new school is to be erected to cost \$7000. There are also a postoffice, express and telegraph office, and it is said it will be an important station on the Borderland Auto route.

shaft has been sunk 62 feet through porphyry showing copper sulphides all the way down, gradually enriching in values. There is also an open cut and another shaft on below the main shaft on the porphyry ridge also showing disseminated chalcopyrites. This belt extends northward over a mile. On the Queen is a shallow open cut from which a car of copper sulphide ore was once shipped to smelter running 10 percent and carrying gold valued. This is an east and west lode, 15 feet wide. Fifty feet west of the open cut a shaft has been sunk 25 feet deep, from which a carload of ore was taken and corral on few dump. It is rich in chalcopyrites and will average about 10 percent copper. Another opening was in the south the vein shows oxidized copper ore. This vein resembles a manganite porphyry dike.

Altogether these claims might be called a mountain of disseminated copper sulphides in monzonite porphyry, and while no development has come steam shovel mining proposition similar to the Ray Consolidated Copper mine and those in the Clifton-Moenc district.

Above the porphyries is the limestone mountain in contact. Here are found valuable deposits of lead, silver and zinc.

Immediately west of the Queen mine are the claims of D. L. Creswell, recently located on the Queen lode.

The Johnny Bull Mine.

Immediately south of and adjoining the King and Queen copper group is the Johnny Bull mine owned by Capt. Henry, of New York, on which are two inclined shafts, the deeper having a depth of 150 feet, which is cut at 40 feet depth by a crosscut tunnel. The ore consists of bunches of massive pyrites and chalcopyrites, and some barite and malachite and chrysocolla. The ore encountered were mostly in a garnet zone near a monzonite dike, one of which is traceable for several miles. From a large stope in the 40 foot level considerable copper ore was recovered. Northwest of the King and Queen copper mine is a good copper prospect called the "Scab on the Hill," owned by J. C. Hayden and D. L. Creswell, on which a shaft 25 feet deep shows a good little vein of copper carrying it is claimed \$18 in gold. Three hundred yards east of the Queen copper mine, up the main mountain in the limestone is the Cloudman mine and lead mine owned by Cloudman and Bradberry, of El Paso. It is developed by two shafts and a drift at the 50 foot level. The zinc ores are a lead and blende.

On the eastern side of the range, south of Stearns, the veins carry lead, zinc and silver. Three miles south of Stearns are the claims of John N. Bennett, William Charles and Charles Noble. The vein is about one foot wide and carries mostly silver, some vanadium crystals. In it is an open cut 25 feet long.

The Cloudman mine, consisting of the Moon, Stars and Sun claims is three miles south of Stearns and owned by Wm. Charles of Stearns. It is developed by a shaft 40 feet deep, showing a pay streak two feet wide at the bottom carrying 24 percent zinc and 12 percent lead, together with some silver. This property was worked under lease and bond by J. R. Morris until lately.

Six miles south of Stearns on the east side of the range is a zinc property owned by J. C. Henderson, of Pratt, N. M. and J. C. McCampa, a rancher near Stearns, of considerable merit.

The Little Paul, about one and a half miles south of Stearns, north shows a decomposed basic porphyry with a system of fractures in which occur decomposed pyrite and some chrysocolla and chalcopyrite. From this material carries fair gold values.

On the southeast slope of Mineral Mountain, the Cliff group of eight claims, owned by Dennis Clifford, of El Paso. Considerable development work has been done by them. The ores are gold, silver, lead and zinc. Samples of ore are assayed from three to six ounces gold, 24 to 30 ounces silver and 20 to 50 percent lead.

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Additional Mining News on Pages 13 and 14.

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A REMARKABLE GROWTH

The Following Comparative Figures Show the Remarkable Growth of

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During the Past Five Years

	Deposits	Total Assets
September, 1908	\$2,621,508	\$3,336,291
September, 1909	3,244,323	4,368,812
September, 1910	3,504,030	4,920,269
September, 1911	4,194,102	5,613,475
September, 1912	5,218,513	7,026,878

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